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The emergence of the cult of saints

MI: When the voice of the people made decisions

By Russell Hardiman

Introduction

In the previous article of this issue (pp5-6) there is a broad brush outline of some of the major items of continuity about the word "saint" between the Hebrew scriptures and how the word was used in the New Testament. There is also a reference to the use of the Greek word *hagios*, both in the singular and in the plural, as *hagioi*, which opens up a huge area of research which became a specialised discipline in itself, hagiography. This is the science of the study of the saints. In itself, hagiography became the art form of expressing the interest generated across the emerging Christian Church in its developing modes in particular epochs of history.

The continuity of the veneration of saints was shaped by the events of the secular world and the emergence of new peoples invading Europe from Asia and providing a challenge to monks especially with a missionary zeal to bring the new emerging nations into the Christian world of Europe and the Eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea.

The impressive numbers of the key figures, their incredible activities, and the extraordinary geographical areas covered led to a much more intensive project that I first envisaged. After considerable reflection this led to a decision to divide the sequence into two epochs corresponding to the division of time with which we are more familiar after living through the transition to the 3rd Millennium in recent decades.

Two Millennia of Christianity

This somewhat arbitrary distinction is quite useful so that the two chronological eras are not simply equal divisions of time, but they are also somewhat connected at the level of a call in the earliest decades to adjusting to a new world vision and mission.

The titles we have used to designate the two time frames give a major insight into the very radical differences between the two periods under consideration.

In the 1st Millennium Christianity grew in strength because of the simple yet attractive ways of visibly living the Gospel values to a meritable extent verified in the conversion of so many cultures that the word "Catholic" emerged with the very intention of expressing the universal presence of Christ's Body, the Church, in the world of that time.

By modern protocols it becomes quite an interesting insight to realise the strong level of influence and impact of ordinary Christians expressing the *vox populi*, which resulted in the grass roots' acclamations of saints who could be acclaimed even within a year of their death as was St Anthony of Padua in 1232AD.

The 2nd Millennium becomes quite different in the way the measure of judgement, or canon, is gradually absorbed by the emerging male clerical and monastic leadership which led to new reforms and structures that became synonymous with the new basis of canon law and created the process of canonisation.

The recent events of this year, concluding the long saga, led up to the last steps of the canonisation of

Blessed Mary of the Cross, the first Australian saint.

Any reading of this present article, even as long as it is, would benefit from reading the brief study of the *Cult of the saints* (pp5-6). This would help to set a context for the many practices, rituals, customs, and particularly the forms of burial of the dead and celebrating their anniversaries of death in this timeline. Even though many of the individual dates or data, in any era, have their own context and subject, it would be beneficial always to keep in mind and be conscious of the impact of these matters in the sequence of these changing dates.

1st Century

Origins of Christianity

The crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus were both the low points, for those close to Jesus, but they were also transformed into the vision of being raised up with Jesus and living in the Spirit that he had promised. This transformation was personified in many of the personages in the New Testament, particularly in the Acts of the Apostles, such as the deacon, St Stephen, and many others ministering in one mode or another.

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus led eventually to his letters to the saints of the Churches he had founded. His personal story also was a model for others to accept the call to live the values of their family life in living the Gospel. Obviously, in this first generation of the Church there were not the structures, the patterns of leadership and service, yet the witness of those living by the Gospel drew many others to be "saints", in the phrase of St Paul.

St Paul himself wrote at least two letters to the Thessalonians chastising them for their laziness or lack of faith about death or the coming of Christ. Christian foundation is built on the Christian eschatology of the new and final age: "The now, but not yet" contrast between the "new age in the Spirit" and the "final age of Christ's second coming". Paul emphasises the first phrase.

After the martyrdom of St James the Greater in 43AD eventually all the original apostles gave their life as martyrs for their faith. In the anamnestic tradition Christians built on from their Hebrew backgrounds, their celebration in life and death was to build on the sense that NOW they are sharing the rewards promised by their God. This became the pattern of Christian prayer that re-membering was linking together the present generation with the past in the one timeframe of God.

Throughout the 1st Century the spasmodic persecutions of the Romans throughout their empire created a culture of both prayers for the dead and the reflection on how much their faith was a lesson for everyone else. The most literate expression of this was in St John the Evangelist. He fulfilled the request of Jesus' "Behold your Mother" giving a testimony as the last apostle to die. His Gospel and letters were read around the shores of the Mediterranean Sea so that *Mare Nostrum* (literally "our sea") Christian hope was lived out by saints of every gender and age group.

2nd Century

The witness and intercessory power of martyrs

*The public veneration of saints in the Christian Church is known to have existed since the 2nd Century. As will be shown below, it developed in local communities; it was based on the saint's tomb; it was a consequence of the general belief that a martyr who shed his blood for Christ was certainly in Heaven and able to exercise intercessory prayer on behalf of those who invoked him.*¹

Christianity as Catholic (for the whole world)

The spasmodic persecution by regional Roman figures or deputies was symptomatic of the varying patterns of governance. Frequently they resulted in the phenomenon of martyrdom in public death. This often resulted in a prominent rallying call from the members from one Christian community to others. The word martyr originally meant a witness for Christ.

155AD

A disciple of John the Evangelist was the 2nd Century leader, St Polycarp whose death can be still read as a special witness to the esteem for a martyr's death.

A remarkably early textual witness to the commemoration of the martyrdom of St Polycarp (Feast Day February 23rd) is found in the book of Eusebius, the founder of *Church History*. The text in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (1913 edition) expresses the purposeful intention of the Church in the celebration of anniversaries:

*...may God grant us to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom with gladness, thus to recall the memory of those who fought in the glorious combat, and to teach and strengthen by his example, those who shall come after us.*²

In the age when martyrdom was a very real danger, Christians began to accept that the word martyr means witness; the apostles were witnesses of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 4:33):

*These witnesses, as members of the Body of Christ the Church, were specially honoured because of their close configuration to Christ. . . The day of death was not the birthday but the death day meaning the natalis or birthday in the heaven of the martyr reunited with Christ by his death and hence the day of commemoration.*³

Other Church leaders were prominent in the persecution of Trajan, such as St Ignatius of Antioch. Towards the end of the 2nd Century a major persecution was started in the era of Marcus Aurelius. One of the most graphic descriptions is of the Martyrs of Lyons. A letter of this group (perhaps written by St Irenaeus) was sent by the churches of Vienne and Lyons to the churches in Asia (the North Eastern Mediterranean areas).

3rd Century

Christianity under Fire

In the years on either side of 250AD, a general persecution was initiated by Decius from which come many fabled martyrs. Amongst the women are St Agatha, St Agnes, and also the doubtful St Christopher.

Before the 1970 *Roman Missal*, St Christopher was one of the most broadly loved saints of any era (see From the Editor pp2-4 in reference to the launch of the *Roman Calendar* at the Vatican in 1969, since then Christopher can only be venerated in local calendars).

In fact, very little is known other than the martyrdom of Christopher, which means very little of his life can be verified. The most common description of Christopher is concerning the gigantic St Christopher carrying a small child across a ford. Despite his own bulk and stature Christopher was struggling even with his great strength. The populist reason is that the child was Christ, carrying in his hand the weight of the whole world. This scene has had innumerable expressions in art.

4th Century

Christianity from an illegal to a legal religion

The most serious persecution began in 305AD in the era of Diocletian. This was to be the most widespread and the most general.

A sense of reward, on the behalf of all those who had died for the faith, may have been a facile response for some when history turned around in the next decade. The transformation hinged on the rise to power of Constantine in his victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge, crossing the River Tiber in Rome, and bringing about a single person government in 313AD. That he was trained in the court of Diocletian adds to the irony of the rapid eclipse of Diocletian's era and the introduction of a new regime with benign thoughts about Christians.

Though Constantine's vision of the cross in the sky, under the words *in hoc signo vinces* in Latin or *nike* in Greek, is projected as a perfect miracle, some of Constantine's practices do not show him a convinced Christian.

He was not baptised until his deathbed, yet he introduced Sunday as a public holiday to allow Christians freedom of worship in his regime. Many of his policies resulted in building great churches in Jerusalem as well as in Rome, while the gift of his mother (St Helena) became the Pope's Palace in Rome, now known as *San Giovanni in Laterano*.

His capacity as Emperor, giving him the power no one else could give, meant the roofs of the *mauselea* burial places on the Vatican Hill were cut off and filled in to create a firm foundation for the relative height in constructing the first St Peter's Basilica.

St Optatus of Milevis (Bishop) writing towards the end of the 4th Century describes how a noble lady (Lucilla) was challenged by Caecilianus, Archdeacon of Carthage, for having kissed before Holy Communion the bones of one who was either not a martyr or whose right to the title was unproved (P.L., 916-917).

The decision to honour a martyr dying for the faith in Christ, and the necessary endorsement to encourage veneration by others, was originally attributed to the authority of the bishop of the place where the martyr had borne his witness. The bishop would confirm the motive of the martyr's death. If confident the subject had died as a martyr the local bishop could send his name, with an account with his martyrdom, to other churches nearby and thereby continue the veneration of the local scene.

The importance of the local scene is verified by the fact that none of the ancient Christian cemeteries have paintings of martyrs other than those who suffered in that neighbourhood.

Nearly all cultures have particular ritual patterns for the time of death and the subsequent burial. Most Catholics would have memories of the stories of the Catacombs they had heard about in their school days. In fact, the ground underneath Rome meant there are kilometres galore of Catacombs shared by various religious traditions.

In 318AD Constantine gave power of jurisdiction to bishops in civil proceedings between Christians and other Christians and on some issues also between Christians and non-Christians. In 321AD the bishops' capacity expanded further when they were given legal power to grant manumission to free Christian slaves and to grant the rights of citizenship to those made free. In this same era of change the Church administrators, particularly the bishops and their assistants (the deacons and priests) were now conscious of their proper place in the carefully graded social scale of the Roman Empire and their proper priority in questions of court protocol. It is not surprising that the model plan of buildings for Christianity was built around the space within a Basilica, the legal space we might describe as a court room with a special chair for the judge (*cathedra* or chair) which gave the name eventually to a bishop's church as Cathedral. The circular east wall or apse also became an obvious connection to this source in Christian architecture, as were the seats for the clergy or choir.

In such an era of the early 4th Century, the Christian Church grew with buildings and processes that reflected their new stance in the Western Roman Empire. It is not surprising in this new culture that the bishops in their dioceses, especially those around the hills surrounding Rome, became part of the structure of the Bishop of Rome as Pope and, eventually, had the responsibility to make the decision about declaring any individual a saint for veneration in the area of their burial.

The influence of Constantine's status and power is shown in 325AD, when the Emperor convened the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea to resolve conflict with the Arians about the divinity of Christ. The Emperor saw his responsibility to build churches throughout the Empire: Jerusalem, Syria, Germany, Rome, and Constantinople. The Empire subsequently developed into two spheres, the Western Roman Empire based on Rome and the Eastern Roman Empire based in the city named after himself as Constantinople.

Even in this new Roman Empire environment, there were still occasional persecutions in individual situations. A classic example of the differences at the fringes of the Empire is the story of the forty Armenian soldiers who were to put death by exposure on a frozen lake in 320AD in Sebaste in Eastern Armenia. Their story is famous in the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox traditions and the scene is often depicted in graphic art tableaux. The lack of historic verifiable data is the grounds in which the cult of the forty Armenian martyrs was suppressed in 1969 along with their feast day March 10th.

5th Century

From Christianity to Christendom

In consecutive centuries known as the late antiquities (5th Century and 6th Century) the Christian Church itself became more and more associated with the more legal forms of the structures of the decaying former Roman Empire. At the same time there was movement away from the dominant missionary viewpoint of Christ's Body the Church. After Constantine's lifting the illegal status of Christianity (in 313AD) although claiming to be Christian but postponing baptism, he made Sunday the day of rest. He also gave bishops certain legal duties to perform, such as judgement over two Christians. Similarly, the Church leaders, bishops, priests, deacons, in their regalia absorbed symbolic clothing of the ailing Roman Empire. They also took on practices of the legal elites of the Roman authorities complete with the cross leading a procession through the streets, together with incense, which served more of an olfactory absorption of the smells and refuse of the city.

The role of bishops was also shaped by elements of the Roman Empire. The word diocese, as describing the area of a particular bishop's pastoral territory, was taken from the Roman division of the territories it controlled. There were twelve dioceses beyond the Diocese of Rome through all the lands circulating the Mediterranean Sea and Northern Europe and Britain.

The consequences are often summed up in the pithy phrase "From Christianity to Christendom". The essence of this phrase is the movement beyond Christianity's strength of the earliest centuries, even with persecution surrounding them, to a loss of the basics of Christianity to move towards filling in the gaps in the governing of many sectors of the former Roman Empire.

After centuries of persecution and occasional outbursts at particular areas, like in Sebaste (p8) the esteem for the witness of martyrs who died for their faith was still a major characteristic of Christian practice. This culture is affirmed in a text of the 5th Century. We find the Fathers exclaiming: *Flavianus lives after death! May the Martyr pray for us!* This particular phrase in the text of the Council of Chalcedon (Session 11, 451AD) draws attention to the sense of connection between the living and the martyrs who have died.

Even as the Christian star was waxing under the Romans, the sacking of Rome in 410AD was a rude awakening. The strategy of Alaric, to sack Rome by sailing up the river Tiber from its mouth at Ostia, surprised the normal defences of Rome. This invasion generated new factors where dying for the faith was a very possible reality. The cult of martyrs had another impetus to foster its veneration.

6th Century

The influence of monasticism

The Western Roman Empire gradually absorbed much of the leadership of the Christian Church into a culture that moved further and further away from the teaching of the Gospel. Not all Christians were happy at this change of emphasis. There were various movements, usually by individuals who became prominent, but who gradually drew people attracted by their stance and practice who wished to join them. In

this way, St Antony was the founder of these communities that makes him stand out as the patriarch of all monks. About the year 305AD he established communities in various places in upper Egypt and many followed his lifestyle. St Athanasius was the biographer of St Antony. In some cultures St Antony is recalled with the name given to the viral condition of shingles. In Italian it is called *I Fuochi di Sant' Antonio* (The Fires of St Antony).

Another prominent hermit was St Pachomius who is renowned as the creator of convents, where women had the opportunity to live the eremitical life.

The most famous of monks is St Benedict of Nursia (the namesake of New Norcia, the first Benedictine Monastery in Western Australia in 1846). Benedict is renowned for his Rule which became the basis of the religious life of thousands of monasteries and communities. This St Benedict is now the mentor of Pope Benedict XVI, who deliberately chose the name Benedict because of Benedict's role as the Patron Saint of Europe. Pope Benedict now challenges the secularist states of Europe to recognise their Christian heritage. The Benedictines rapidly spread throughout the world and through modified versions of the Benedictine Rule have had further waves of huge development in the 8th Century, 9th Century, and in the 11th Century.

A teaching of St Augustine (+504AD) in drawing attention to giving to God alone adoration strictly so called, while giving honour to the saints because of their supernatural gifts which earned them eternal life. In Augustine's famous volume *City of God* XXII.10:

...The Church erects her altars to God alone, though in honour and memory of the saints and martyrs.

The true origin of canonisation and beatification is to be found in the basis of the Catholic teaching of worship (*cultus*), invocation, and intercession of the saints.

By contemporary values, the Latin peoples can be labelled enthusiasts, yet sometimes they may show a magnificent grasp of the non-essentials.

Regardless of the personal sanctity of any saint, as any corporate group would claim, no member of such a body can act contrary to the group's authority in this perspective it is not surprising that regulations were introduced to maintain the group's values.

The strength of monasticism also shaped and formed a new level of workers within the Church's administrative structures. One outstanding example of this phenomenon is the emergence St Gregory the Great (c540-604) who brought to Rome many monks to help in the administration he had learned in Rome and Constantinople. While proof is not absolute, the name of Pope Gregory is also associated with Gregorian Chant. He also commissioned St Augustine of Canterbury in 595AD to take forty of his monks to convert Great Britain away from some of the Celtic influences and practices, such as the date for Easter and the form of Tonsure. The Celtic Church also enjoyed a notable list of Celtic saints and monks. Wherever they went, Irish saints also are venerated as, is shown in the *Bobbio Missal* taken to North Italy by Celtic monks. St Pope Gregory's mandate also was given to convert elements within the existing practices that could be integrated into the Roman Rite, yet there are few

examples of that consideration being implemented as an early example of inculturation.

7th Century

Expansion in converting the Barbarians

In an era of new beginnings and expansion, the North Western parts of Europe, what we now recognise as Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales, suffered great losses at the hands of the Vikings from Scandinavia and also grew considerably in new foundations such as Dublin, Waterford, and Wexford. In the same decades the nomadic Celtic Irish were also moving to new areas. The earlier centuries had seen strong growth in evangelisation through the Celtic world which in turn expanded to many other territories.

In 664AD the Northumbrian Council of Whitby classified the elements of dispute between the Celtic Church and the Roman Church mostly to the dominance of the Roman Rites over the Celtic traditions (see *Pastoral Liturgy* Vol 40, 1 p14).

In this same period, the Moslem era began to emerge and Mahomet revised the KORAN and in 632AD the Arabs captured Jerusalem.

The Celtic monks, from the richness of their spirituality, grounded with their close contact with the hard experience of life on the extremities of the coastal areas rose with zeal to the challenge of *Perigrinatio pro Christo* (Pilgrimage for Christ) which motivated their departure from their home islands and heading across the waters to many parts of Europe, Germany, to Lombardy in Italy, and the Goths in Spain.

The Celtic culture is also renowned for its calligraphy and the skill in elaborate scrolls and early versions of books by binding scrolls together. The earliest calendar to survive from Anglo-Saxon, England, is that of St Willibrord, the Northumbrian Missionary of Frisia in the early 8th Century. . . It testifies to his veneration of the saints of the whole Church, such as St Mary, the Apostles, and the early Roman martyrs, as well as several English saints such as Oswald, Cuthbert, and Chad.⁴

In a similar vision, St Boniface from England crossed the channel and worked in the goal of the conversion of the Barbarian tribes who had invaded so much of modern day Germany. Boniface was close to the royal family and crowned the Carolingian King Pepin the Short in 751AD at Siossons. This royal family were to dominate for over three generations in Germany.

The strong connections of the German Kings saw the emergence in 756AD of the birth of the Pontifical State, being the origin of the temporal power of the Popes in Rome. This climaxed on Christmas Day of the year 800AD, when the Mass in Rome, presided by Pope Leo III, who about to crown the King, was shocked when the King took the crown out of his hands and crowned himself.

8th Century

Charlemagne's Holy Roman Empire

A child of Visigoth background, one of the Barbarian tribes who invaded Europe, was born in Languedoc served as a cup-bearer in the court of Pepin and Charlemagne. As St Benedict of Aniane, he is renowned for the abbey he founded in 779AD on his own land.

The Emperor commissioned him to the oversight of all the monasteries in the region and eventually to reform all the French and German monasteries.

Almost as a parallel with the Celtic missionaries and their endeavours, there is also a *Martyrology of Bede* (c730AD) and the *Old English Martyrology* from 9th Century Mercia which show more extensive coverage but similar proportions: Most of the saints venerated were of foreign origin; only a few were natives of these islands.⁵

9th Century

Missionaries into Eastern Europe

In 817AD at Aachen, Benedict of Aniane presided over a meeting of the abbots in Charlemagne's Empire, which was a turning point in Benedictine history. In a similar vein, in 826AD, there was a great synod at Rome on the consecration of bishops.

After the Pontificate of Leo III (797-816AD) two blood brothers, Cyril, a secular western priest, and Methodius, a monk in a Greek monastery resurrected the missionary zeal. They began their mission in 863AD in evangelising Moravia, now an independent state within the Russian Federation. They eventually met with opposition there from German missionaries, so they returned to Rome seeking an apostolic blessing on their vision. While in Rome, Cyril became a member of a Benedictine Monastery but died there rather shortly after. Methodius returned to Moravia and Pannonia with the permission of the Pope to celebrate the liturgy in Slavonic. In spite of the Papal affirmation, German bishops turned against him because of his use of Slavonic. Even so, his apostolate found great support and he and his brother are now immortal because the written alphabet of their adopted language is still called the Cyrillic text after Cyril.

Another accolade was conferred on these brother saints in 1980, when they were proclaimed co-patrons of Europe, with St Benedict of Nursia by Pope John Paul II, himself a Pope of Slavic background.⁶

There were also other missionaries to various areas of Europe often impacted by the Barbarian tribes crossing into Europe from beyond the Caucasus Mountains. St Ansgar, a French born Benedictine from Old Corbie in Picardy, was transferred after profession to New Corbie in Saxony in Germany. From there he was taken from the King of Denmark to evangelise the heathen Danes. Over two decades he worked in Sweden, Norway, and North Germany.

In Bulgaria, King Boris was converted in 863AD.⁷ This draws attention to a particular strategy that sometimes worked and sometimes did not. The intention was to convert the king, the leader of his people, but it rarely was readily successful that the King's word was heard. Later in Reformation time, the similar phenomenon happened when the slogan *cuius regio, eius religio* (who's boss, whose religion) was practised by the assumption that where the king or queen ruled, their religion would be the faith of their subjects.

10th Century

Another monastic reform

In spite of the massive impact through the chain of monasteries through the adherents of the Rule of St Benedict, over time there was the need of renewal and revitalisation in the eyes of the founder of a new monastic reform which was picked up in many areas through the 10th Century through the Monastery of Cluny. This soon became more than one place, but a sequence of places.

In 909AD a lay person, William the Pious, Duke of Aquitaine, founded this influential Monastery of Cluny near Macon in Burgundy. The first abbot (909-927AD) established a high standard of monastic observance, returning to the strict observance of the Benedictine Rule with an encouragement of a strong personal spiritual life and with emphasis on the choir office and the splendour and solemnity of worship with less emphasis on manual labour.

The successor of Berno of Baume was St Odo (920-942AD) who capitalised on Berno's basics and soon many other monasteries in the south of France and even the Italian houses requested to reform themselves using the Cluniac model.⁸ For several centuries the Cluny model became the origin of decisive influence in the life of the Church. A particular characteristic was the capacity of figures from noble families who joined the community, but refused high ecclesiastical office for their chosen life. These ideals also inspired many in the secular clergy encouraging many reforms along the Cluny model.

Just as a renewed endeavour in monastic circles, so too was there a renewed enthusiasm of many kings who were conscious of their leadership of the people.

In 966AD, Mieszko, the first King of Poland was converted to Christianity.⁹ This event triggered major celebrations in 1966 as a celebration of the thousand years of the Catholic identity of Poland in the same era as the first Polish Pope.

St Stephen, as King of Hungary, worked together with his wife's brother, St Henry II in the late 10th Century in their shared hopes of Christianising their people.¹⁰ He organised dioceses and established monasteries and recruited prominent foreign monks to lead in the formation of the Magyar people who still revere him as their greatest hero and national saint.

In 962AD, Otto I was crowned head of the Holy Roman Germanic Empire by John XII. It also was the occasion of endowing special privileges on the Pontifical States which helped develop the status of the growing Papal States in Italy.

In a similar role, St Vladimir (956-1015AD) the great Prince of Kiev in Russia was brought up a pagan. Before his marriage to the sister of the Byzantine Emperor in 987, he was baptised Christian and invited the Greek clergy to evangelise in Russia as a help to convert his people. His two sons are also venerated as martyrs.

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along the principles proclaimed by the Second Vatican Council.

21st Century

Pope John Paul II

As early as 1976, the Archbishop of Cracow delivered meditations for the Lent of 1976 in the Vatican. Then, two years later, as the newly elected Pope, he returned to some of these same themes in his first Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis*. He shared his vision that the Jubilee of 2000 was to be a Great Jubilee which would involve not only Christians around the world but, in some way, all of humanity. He would call all Catholics to an examen of conscience in order to reach down deeply into a radical transformation of life, but it would have a strong and forceful ecumenical connotation at the same time.

John Paul II had the most broad perception of the principle for saints for all the world, as articulated in Vatican II. His vision was for saints for every country, language, or culture as exemplars for each nation to reflect on his own call to all the inhabitants of the shared globe: "The world can change". He made this obvious in tangible ways in 1995 in his pastoral visit to Australasia when he planned the beatification of Peter To Rot in Papua New Guinea; of Mother Mary of the Cross (Mary MacKillop rsj) in Sydney; and in a similar light, Fr Joseph Vass de Sousa, an Indian Oblate of Mary Immaculate omi who was revered in a special way in Sri Lanka, especially amongst the Tamil people.

Perhaps the greatest interest in the mind of John Paul II and his vision for saints for every sector of the Church is the way he has sought to make the canonisation of saints a corporate activity. This was an historic practice, perhaps best known in the English speaking world, for the hundreds of English martyrs between 1535-1681. Leo XIII beatified 54 of the English martyrs and Pius XI 137 in 1929. Some, like St Thomas More also have a feast day as an individual.

Around the world there are now frequent situations when martyrs in groups have been honoured by the Church in older European empires such as England, France, Spain, Ireland; and in the New World of East Asia in China, Japan, Vietnam, Korea; and in the New World of North America, Mexico, Canada, and American first nations; and in Africa, especially Uganda and Sudan. Once again, the Christian hope of life beyond life and life in death will be verified in the 5th Century prayer: The blood of martyrs, is the seed of Christians – *Sanguis martyrum, semen Christianorum*.

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